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REMARKS

Claims 43-47, 49-58 and 65-69 are pending. Claims 43, 46, 47 and 49 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' specification in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,102,465 to Nemoto, U.S. Patent No. 5,358,300 to Gray, and U.S. Patent No. 6,371,551 to Hedderly. Claims 44 and 45 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' specification, Nemoto, Gray, Hedderly, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,071,619 to De Winter. Claim 50 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' specification, Nemoto, Gray, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,439,725 to Roberts. Claims 51 and 58 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' specification, Gray and Roberts. Claims 52, 55 and 56 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' specification, Gray, Roberts and Nemoto. Claims 53 and 54 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' specification, Gray, Roberts, Nemoto and De Winter. Claim 57 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' specification, Gray, Roberts and Hedderly. Claims 65, 68 and 69 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' specification, Nemoto, Gray, Hedderly and Roberts. Claims 68 and 69 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' specification, Nemoto, Gray, Hedderly, Roberts and De Winter.

Applicants have amended independent Claims 43, 50, 51 and 65, as indicated above, to further clarify Applicants' invention. Applicants respectfully traverse the claim rejections for at least the reasons set forth below.

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§103 Rejections Are Overcome

Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are patentable over the cited references because the cited combinations fail to disclose or suggest the recitations of the pending claims and the reasoning behind such combinations has not been established. The Action combines anywhere from three to six references in support of its rejections. Applicants respectfully submit that the Action is merely using Applicants' specification as a roadmap to pick and choose which references to combine. Nonetheless, Applicants have amended each of the pending independent Claims as set forth above to clearly distinguish Applicants' invention from the numerous collection of references cited by the Action.

Applicants' amended independent Claim 43 recites a method of installing a vehicle cockpit assembly within a passenger compartment of a vehicle, wherein the passenger compartment is separated from an engine compartment by a firewall, wherein the passenger compartment comprises a floor, the method comprising:

- providing a dash insulator *of thermoformable material* that is configured to be attached to the vehicle firewall;
- attaching an instrument panel to a first edge portion of the dash insulator *via adhesive, wherein the adhesive serves as a hinge that allows the instrument panel and dash insulator to move relative to each other to facilitate installation of the cockpit assembly within the vehicle passenger compartment;*
- ascertaining acoustic properties of the vehicle to identify portions of the dash insulator requiring sound reflection and/or absorption;
- applying sound reflection and/or absorption material to identified portions of the dash insulator; and
- installing the attached dash insulator and instrument panel within a vehicle as a single cockpit assembly.

None of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest *a dash insulator of thermoformable material*. Moreover, none of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest attaching an instrument panel to a first edge portion of the dash insulator *via adhesive, wherein the adhesive serves as a hinge that allows the instrument panel and dash insulator to move relative to each other to facilitate installation of the cockpit assembly within the vehicle passenger compartment*. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the present rejection of independent Claim 43, and all claims depending therefrom, under 35 U.S.C. §103.

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Applicants' amended independent Claim 50 recites a method of installing a vehicle cockpit assembly within a passenger compartment of a vehicle, wherein the passenger compartment is separated from an engine compartment by a firewall, wherein the passenger compartment comprises a floor, the method comprising:

- providing a dash insulator *of thermoformable material* that is configured to be attached to the vehicle firewall;
- attaching an instrument panel to *a first edge portion* of the dash insulator;
- ascertaining acoustic properties of the vehicle to identify portions of the dash insulator requiring sound reflection and/or absorption;
- applying sound reflection and/or absorption material to identified portions of the dash insulator;
- attaching a floor covering to a second edge portion of the dash insulator *via adhesive, wherein the adhesive serves as a hinge that allows the floor covering and dash insulator to move relative to each other to facilitate installation of the cockpit assembly within the vehicle passenger compartment*; and
- installing the attached dash insulator, floor covering and instrument panel within a vehicle as a single cockpit assembly.*

None of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest *a dash insulator of thermoformable material*. Moreover, none of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest attaching a floor covering to an edge portion of a dash insulator *via adhesive, wherein the adhesive serves as a hinge that allows the floor covering and dash insulator to move relative to each other to facilitate installation of the cockpit assembly within the vehicle passenger compartment*. In addition, none of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest *installing the attached dash insulator, floor covering and instrument panel within a vehicle as a single cockpit assembly*. The Action, on Page 4, concludes that it is an obvious matter of design choice to attach a floor covering and instrument panel to a dash insulator and then install same within a vehicle as a single cockpit assembly. The Action cites no evidence in support of its conclusion. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the present rejection of independent Claim 50 under 35 U.S.C. §103.

Applicants' amended independent Claim 51 recites a method of installing a vehicle cockpit assembly within a passenger compartment of a vehicle, wherein the passenger compartment is separated from an engine compartment by a firewall, and wherein the passenger compartment comprises a floor, the method comprising:

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providing a dash insulator *of thermoformable material* that is configured to be attached to the vehicle firewall, and that includes an upper substrate having opposite first and second surfaces and opposite first and second edge portions, a lower substrate having opposite third and fourth surfaces and opposite third and fourth edge portions, wherein the upper and lower substrates are configured to be joined together along the respective second and third edge portions;

attaching an instrument panel to the upper substrate first edge portion *via adhesive* to form a first cockpit assembly portion;

attaching a floor covering to the lower substrate fourth edge portion *via adhesive* to form a second cockpit assembly portion;

installing the first and second cockpit assembly portions within a vehicle such that the first and second substrates are attached to the firewall; and

joining the upper and lower substrates together along the second and third edge portions thereof.

None of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest *a dash insulator of thermoformable material*. None of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest attaching an instrument panel to an upper substrate first edge portion *via adhesive* to form a first cockpit assembly portion. None of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest attaching a floor covering to the lower substrate fourth edge portion *via adhesive* to form a second cockpit assembly portion. Moreover, none of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest installing the first and second cockpit assembly portions within a vehicle such that the first and second substrates are attached to the firewall, and joining the upper and lower substrates together along the second and third edge portions thereof. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the present rejection of independent Claim 51, and all claims depending therefrom, under 35 U.S.C. §103.

Applicants' amended independent Claim 65 recites a method of installing a vehicle cockpit assembly within a passenger compartment of a vehicle, wherein the passenger compartment is separated from an engine compartment by a firewall, and wherein the passenger compartment comprises a floor, the method comprising:

providing a dash insulator *of thermoformable material* that is configured to be attached to the vehicle firewall;

attaching an instrument panel to the dash insulator *via adhesive, wherein the adhesive serves as a hinge that allows the instrument panel and dash insulator to move relative to each other to facilitate installation of the cockpit assembly within the vehicle passenger compartment*;

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attaching a floor covering to the dash insulator *via adhesive, wherein the adhesive serves as a hinge that allows the floor covering and dash insulator to move relative to each other to facilitate installation of the cockpit assembly within the vehicle passenger compartment;*

ascertaining acoustic properties of the vehicle to identify portions of the dash insulator requiring sound reflection and/or absorption;

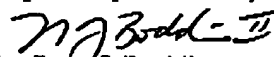
applying sound reflection and/or absorption material to identified portions of the dash insulator; and

installing the attached dash insulator, instrument panel and floor covering within a vehicle as a single cockpit assembly.

None of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest *a dash insulator of thermoformable material*. None of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest attaching an instrument panel to the dash insulator *via adhesive, wherein the adhesive serves as a hinge that allows the instrument panel and dash insulator to move relative to each other to facilitate installation of the cockpit assembly within the vehicle passenger compartment*. None of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest attaching a floor covering to the dash insulator *via adhesive, wherein the adhesive serves as a hinge that allows the floor covering and dash insulator to move relative to each other to facilitate installation of the cockpit assembly within the vehicle passenger compartment*. None of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest installing the attached dash insulator, instrument panel and floor covering within a vehicle as a single cockpit assembly. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the present rejection of independent Claim 65, and all claims depending therefrom, under 35 U.S.C. §103.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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